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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/C, S/USSES
NSC FOR GAVIN
LONDON FOR POL - LORD
PARIS FOR POL - BAIN AND KANEDA
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR AU

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SUBJECT: FRENCH IN CHAD SEE IMPROVED CLIMATE FOR CHAD-SUDAN
RAPPROCHEMENT

REF: NDJAMENA 399

FRENCH OPTIMISM

¶1. (SBU) French Ambassador Bruno Foucher, who returned last week from nearly two months in France, told me September 15 that he saw more indications of willingness to normalize Chad-Sudan relations on both sides of the border than he had before he left N'Djamena in mid-July.

REASONS WHY

¶2. (SBU) Foucher admitted that he was tending toward a relatively optimistic view of the prospects for rapprochement between Chad and Sudan. Among the elements he cited in support of such a view were:

-- Senior-level talks on normalization of relations between the two countries at the AU Summit in Tripoli on the margins of AU meetings there in late August/early September.

-- At least a slight "softened tone of discourse" on both sides.

-- In Tripoli, Sudan's proposal, and Chad's acceptance, of a high-level delegation from GOS to Chad (to be led by Razi Saladdin).

-- GOC confirmation that it supported renewal of the Dakar Accord Contact Group process, and Chad's willingness to attend a Contact Group meeting in Khartoum if and when the GOS issued invitations.

-- Plans to relocate the Oure Cassoni refugee camp, the main one frequented by JEM, to a site some 30 kilometers north and west of Bahai town and thus further away from the porous border. (These plans were given impetus by Deby's visit to Oure Cassoni camp last month. If implemented, such a move would make life in Chad harder for JEM and could be a step in a larger Deby plan to "arranger l'affaire du JEM" in Chad.)

-- Recent travel by Infrastructure Minister Younousmi (who is very close to Deby) to Egypt, where he told Mubarak that Chad was tired of its struggle with Sudan and sincerely

wanted better relations with Khartoum.

COMMENT

¶3. (SBU) The French are of course generally bullish on Chad and the GOC, but Foucher is the best-informed ambaassador here and not given to hyperbole or exhuberant optimism. We agree generally that there are indications of the possibility of progress in Chad-Sudan relations, especially after our conversation with FORMIN Faki this morning (Reftel), which confirmed important elements of Foucher's picture.

¶4. (SBU) We believe that Chad and Deby have an interest in a stable Darfur that would not provide safe haven for Chad rebels. We believe further that harboring JEM on Chadian soil is at best a mixed blessing for the GOC and for Deby, and that relations with JEM are now as much a concern as a solace for the GoC. We judge that Deby would be willing to trade in his current relations with JEM for a stable, Chad-rebel-free Darfur. The GOC says that it has "pressed" and "pressured" JEM to seek a political solution to the Darfur crisis and to be more tractable with mediators, other Darfur players, and the GOS. The relocation of Oure Cassoni camp could be a Deby quid aimed at securing Khartoum's quo to end its support for Chad rebels in Sudan.

¶5. (U) Minimize considered.
NIGRO